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Security Information

29 July 1953

CURRENT SITUATION IN INDOCHINA

- I. No break in sight in Indochina.
- II. French leaders are arguing over political concessions.
  - A. Thus, no dramatic statement has been made to rally Indochinese nationalism.
  - B. Time for such a statement may have passed.
  - C. Suspicion and inertia of Indochinese leaders continue.
- III. French airborne operations at Langson are an encouraging sign of offensive-mindedness.
  - A. But defeat of the Viet Minh depends primarily on effective national armies.
  - B. Progress in developing native forces is unsatisfactory.
- IV. Paris appears reluctant to increase the French commitment.
  - A. Navarre's request for more troops will probably not be fully met.
  - B. Effect of Korean truce works against a larger French effort.
- V. The military picture is not bright.
  - A. Chinese aid to the Viet Minh has doubled over last year.
  - B. The Viet Minh believed stronger than ever now for an offensive next fall.
- VI. French airborne operation at Langson caught the Viet Minh off balance.
  - A. About 5,000 tons of enemy materiel destroyed at Langson;

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1. However, operation's psychological impact on both French and Viet Minh troops in Indochina overshadows strategic significance.
- VII. Amphibious raid north of Hue on 28 July culminates operations along central Vietnam coast.
- A. 10,000 French Union troops involved.
  - B. Intended to destroy 2 Viet Minh regular battalions.
  - C. French taking advantage of dry season this area.
- VIII. Chinese aid to Viet Minh averaged 900 tons monthly during first half 1953.
- A. Compares with monthly average of 500 tons in 1952.
  - B. June deliveries were 2,600 tons.
  - C. Increase possibly temporary, but transport improvements suggest augmented program.
- IX. No indications of Viet Minh's autumn campaign plans.
- A. Important possible alternatives are:
    1. Massive attack on Tonkin delta;
    2. Renewal of last spring's offensive in Laos.
- X. On political side, relations between France and Associated States to be renegotiated.
- A. French declaration of 3 July evaded basic issue of whether Associated States have right to withdraw from French Union.
- XI. Evasiveness of French on concessions reflects split in French cabinet.
- A. Bidault would avoid sharing French control.
  - B. Reynaud would stress greater Indochinese and perhaps American responsibility.

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- XII. Public pressures in France for solution to Indochina problem mounting.
  - A. Korea truce stimulates these.
  - B. But parliamentary support for negotiations with Viet Minh not yet very strong.
- XIII. Latest French note to Cambodia promises eventual complete independence.
  - A. Goes further than 3 July statement.
  - B. Cambodia has insisted on independence now, but king seems willing to accept note as basis for negotiations.
    - 1. He says Cambodia must have right to determine what military sectors to be under French command.
    - 2. Also he insists negotiations must be in Cambodia, not France.
- XIV. King proceeding with "mobilization of peasants."
  - A. French say, with some justification, program is directed against them rather than Viet Minh.
- XV. Tension still high in Cambodia. Favorable outcome depends on:
  - A. King's ability to control anti-French feeling.
  - B. Clarification of French position on independence.
- XVI. Vietnam, outwardly conciliatory, obviously expects to profit by any concessions to Cambodia.
- XVII. Uncertainty regarding French intentions continues among Indochinese, inhibits fight against Viet Minh.

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